

February 13, 2023

Written Testimony Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Human Services Committee in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

To the honorable Co-Chairs Senator Lesser and Representative Gilchrist, Ranking Members Senator Seminara and Representative Case, and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Rabbi Andi Fliegel and I am writing in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

I am a resident of West Hartford and a rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford, CT. My congregation is a proud member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA).

Each time my congregation gathers together in worship, we pray for the health and wellbeing of all those among us who are suffering, whether that suffering manifests for as a physical or mental illness. Prayer is mechanism to remind us of our most foundational values. It is meant to inspire us to live the kinds of lives Torah charges us to embody. As a result, when we pray for the healing of anyone who is suffering in their physical or mental health, we are simultaneously charged to do all that is in our power to ensure sufficient access to healthcare services for those same individuals. If we do not, our prayers and our best intentions fall short.

As you are well aware, there is a mental health crisis among adolescents. Current Husky coverage simply falls short. Undocumented adolescents need and deserve access to mental health services they can rely on and that they can afford by being fully insured up to age 26. In addition to the many challenges contributing to the teen mental health crisis, an insecure immigration status increases the likelihood of mental health challenges for these adolescents.

Undocumented immigrants are paying taxes. They should receive adequate healthcare coverage in return. The 83 million dollars the expansion is expected to cost would be significantly offset by the savings provided from current emergency medical expenditures.

Expanding HUSKY access to all income-eligible people, regardless of immigration status, will meaningfully expand access to mental (as well as physical) health care to people who are currently excluded. It is economically sensible, and more than that, it is the moral, just, and faithful thing to do. HB 6616 is an important step in this direction. I urge you to advance this bill out of committee in its current form, and then champion it in the full legislature. I look forward to supporting your efforts.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Rabbi Andi Fliegel